THE LAST LAP

enquired after all the Royal Family and exchanged the usual compliments. Then I remarked hopefully: "Aliábád is quite near now, only four miles isn't it?" "Oh yes, only four miles." I noticed David quietly smiling. We rode about ten yards when I saw (what he remembered but I had quite forgotten) that the great torrent from the Hasanábád glacier cuts in here to join the Hunza River, and we had to go down some 500 or 600 feet to cross it and then up again to get out on to the Aliábád fan. It was exactly the same sort of business as crossing the main river all over again, except that the Hunza roads, however steep and difficult, are better designed and better kept than Nagir ones. Hasanábád village lies on both banks of the torrent, and climbs up the farther side to its own excellent polo-ground. The fields were being reaped, and I marvelled at the neat, tidy rows in which the cut barley was laid out. Everything the Hunzukuts do is beautifully done, and their methods are in the greatest contrast to the slovenliness of Nagir; you notice this everywhere, down to the tinest detail; it may be merely because water is scarcer and life harder that their fields are more scrupulously level, their walls more ingeniously perfect, their cut swathes more exactly aligned, but I incline to think that the cause lies deeper; in the difference of race and temperament already suggested.

Just beyond the wooden bridge which took us over the torrent, we were met by a good-looking elderly man whom we both remembered but could not immediately identify. He was almost in tears as he greeted us. I was puzzled to think why he was so moved. As soon, however, as he had paid full tribute of politeness to us, he bolted on and flung himself on Qudrat Ullah's neck. The whole cavalcade, about forty of us by this time, burst into sympathetic laughter, and poor Qudrat Ullah looked radiant but sheepish as he returned his father's embraces. Going up the steep hillside with so large a following was, as usual, not at all funny. You dare not stop to let your pony breathe without holding up the rest whose horses would be at some most inconvenient turn.

We got up at last, however, and found a fine deputation of all the Hasanábád elders drawn up to greet us on the polo-ground

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

346 outside the House of Assembly (the Maulai kind of meeting-house that has superseded the Shiah mosque). As we neared Aliábád, riding through rich, flat, large fields, and past walled orchards we heard the local band burst into the familiar "welcome music." Presently we came to an open steeply sloping space near the half-ruined Sarkari Fort, and here was a whole party from the capital (four miles away), including Prince Ghazan Khán, the eldest son, and heir of the Mir,[1] and father of the two young princes who had met us earlier. The band changed the time to the "arrival tune," and we all walked on together to this bungalow. We passed a smart set of new
758 little buildings which are the dispensary, built by the Mir.
743 There is a resident Assistant Surgeon here, an Indian with a certain amount of medical training, who is able to render first aid and keeps a stock of simple drugs.

000 We found chairs set out in the rest-house verandah, and while we and Ghazan Khán talked of old times and the latest Hunza news, the rest of our train grouped themselves on the steps, and all the small boys of Aliábád gathered under the trees along the neighbouring watercourse to see any fun that might be going: a jolly, cheery, intelligent crowd they looked, not a moron or cretin among them; again in a marked contrast to Nagir, where both abound. Presently a tray with teapot was brought, and we thankfully turned to the "doctor" (the aforementioned compounder) whose gift it was. Tea was what we were just dying for after the hot climb; but when I poured it out I found it was a tepid mixture of tea, milk, sugar—and cinnamon. David and Ghazan Khán dealt bravely with it; I unobtrusively hid my cup.

643 [1] He succeeded our good friend his father, Sir Muhammad Nazim Khán, in July 1938.

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1936-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

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PLATE VI

1. Old fort-village of Aliábád with beacon tower. Background, Rakapóshi. (*See p.* 123)

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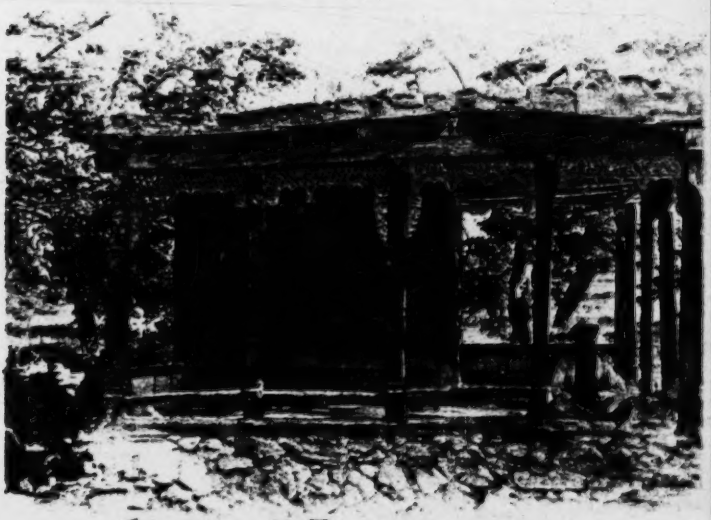
Old Mosque at Aliábád, with Hurmat seated in verandah. (*See p.* 132)



[Facing P. 80]

342 dations, and the walls erected, every stone for which old Nadíro totted down the mountain side on his own back.

531 We often said to each other: "These Hunza people are no artists; that's one reason perhaps why they are so sensible and so like ourselves." But when we looked at the millions and myriads of stones that held their fields, each one in its place, and all fitted as neatly as a jigsaw puzzle, when we examined the lovely curves and tapering points of their five-pronged winnowing forks and the lashings of gut or sinew that bound them, we agreed that they were artists after all—in their own medium.

531 For many months we saw Nadíro spending every spare
342 moment on the site, squaring and planing and trimming the posts and rafters, door-frames and cupboards that will be the pride of his posterity. He was lavishing great care on capitals, and ornamenting them and the lintels with fancy carvings. Except in the house of a special carpenter, carving is not indulged in in Hunza (a great contrast in this respect to Chitral, or even Yasin, where the Chitral tradition has penetrated). The few carved doors and windows that you see in the old forts and mosques at Áltít and Báltít probably date back to
● [346] the Balti craftsmen who built them. There is a little old mosque in Aliábád attractively carved, but no one could tell us for certain whether some foreign craftsman had done the work or local men. The ordinary peasant house, at any rate, has none—Hunza peasant architecture is essentially "functional."

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cumference, twisted them with his fingers till he had a small 286
nucleus of double thread. With a wooden peg he fastened this tiny ball so that it could not unroll, and started swinging it round his head, letting it touch the ground now and again to increase the spin. It travelled in wider and wider circles till the connecting thread became of unmanageable length and began to kink. Then he hauled it in and wound the beautifully twisted length of doubled thread on to the little ball and again pegged it down. Thus he continued till the original ball was exhausted.

Not long after, the Ustád's Hérul Nisa came to say that they were setting up a goats'-hair loom at their house if we would care to see it. We found that this time a large vertical frame standing on the roof of No. 8, lashed to the rafter of the balcony, and in course of being strung with just such a warp thread as Kalbi had shown us in the making. While Hunza sheep [233]
are uniformly white, three kinds of goat are kept: white, brown, and black. Black hair is used for the warp, while the bobbins are wound with white and brown. The bobbins in this case are long, needle-like rods the full width of the cloth, 2 feet or so, with the hair wound round notches in each end. There are only two heddles, thrown backwards and forwards by a forked peg like a boy's catapult. Goats'-hair weaving is a slower job and heavier than wool-weaving, but the Ustád is master of it, too, and was again initiating two younger men. The different coloured hair allows of pattern-weaving, and they enjoy devising new stripes and squares of brown and white. A very heavy comb is needed to beat down the intractable material, and in order to prevent the cloth being drawn too tight by the cross threads, two "bows" of flexible wood were spiked across it to keep it flat and taut. These are inserted as near as possible to the working edge and moved up 352
as work progresses. The goats'-hair strips are used as rugs, or 415
doubled and sewn together to form sacks and saddle-bags.

One day we were exploring the half-ruined village of the 346 ●
old fort, threading the narrow switchback alleys between 345
deserted houses—so narrow that in places you could only edge along sideways—looking for points of vantage from which to

take photographs of the picturesque, abandoned Shiah mosque. It has been superseded by the New Assembly Hall in cut granite with pointed roof—an amazing achievement for local architects and masons, and one of which they are justly proud, but a dreadful eyesore in these surroundings and as uninspiring to an artistic eye as a Methodist chapel in a London suburb. Unfortunately it jostles the picturesque old mosque (whose entrance flight of steps is a delightful notched tree-trunk and whose flat roof bristles with a parapet of ibex horns), so that you can only see the older building squint-eye up or down a 3-foot lane. We pushed on and found ourselves emerging on a bluff covered with handsome graves. The Hunzukuts are too necessarily frugal to bury their dead on any ground that can be cultivated, so their graves usually stand on some barren hump that rises above the reach of irrigation water. Ordinary graves are just covered by flat slabs of concrete-like beaten earth, but more important folk have picturesque erections of varied shape to mark their last resting place. In theory all should no doubt be oriented in relation to Mecca, but in fact the graves face in whichever direction the site makes most convenient. We skirted round God's acre, re-entering the unappetizing labyrinth of desolate lanes, and presently came on a debris-strewn patch of ground whose houses had been dismantled (probably for their timber), and had fallen in. Here old Ferrájo had made a lathe-pit outside a rather handsome wooden door with a carved lintel. This had once led to his family's "town house," but now they lived out in Jamu, a suburb, as it were, of Aliábád. In its day, the warren of buildings to which he proudly pointed had boasted fifty-two "smokes." (A smoke represents a hearth-fire, and a hearth represents a household. In enquiring of a hamlet how many families it shelters, the correct phrase is: "How many smokes have you here?")

We begged Ferrájo to let us see him at work. He had, however, no wood in hand at the moment; chunks of root or cross-sections of willow trunks are the raw material of his bowls. But he let us inspect his pit—very similar in size and shape to a loom-pit—with the treadles and a leather belt passing three

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-5) 1939 AV7 Burusho AV7

find much more of it, and David had hoped to get some interesting notes on the bi-lingualism of children whose parents were of different stocks, but we came across no household among the Burusho we met where the wife was a foreigner.

Social intercourse with Nagir is virtually non-existent. The Hunza menfolk occasionally cross the river to barter Hunza wool for Nagir grain, for the former is much valued, though why, with far more extensive pasturage, the Nagir sheep should yield inferior wool was a mystery we never solved. But though a common language might appear to unite the two people, a difference of religion sunders them, and profoundly different social customs. Centuries of rivalry have left strong, latent feelings of hostility and distrust, probably reinforced—though this is a point on which possibly neither side has consciously reflected—by a difference of race. The Nagir women enjoy no such freedom and equality as the Hunza women do. They still wear unbecoming, dark homespun bonnets concealing all their hair while in Aliábád only one such bonnet had survived the comparatively recent coming of the merry cotton cap. Nagir sheep are predominantly dark brown, and in consequence Nagir caps and *chogas* are of a sombre hue that fittingly symbolizes the less genial temperament. Their Shi'ah mosques are called "Houses of Mourning" (*ma'tim sera*), and their interpretation of Islam seems to be as cheerless as would be a form of Christianity that concentrated all its devotion on the sorrows of Good Friday, and spared no thought for the rejoicings of Easter and Christmas. Now it happens that the Arabic word for mourning (*ma'tim*) sounds very similar to the Burushaski *matum* (black). As we rode through Nagir and noted the dour looks of the Nagirkuts, the crouching, face-averted women, the absence of spontaneous "good days" which brighten every Hunza chance encounter, the fact that when a Nagir prince was riding with us his passage was unmarked by any welcome or salute, our Hunza men would murmur with a grim satisfaction: "Their caps are black, and their cloaks are black, and their mosques are black, and by Allah their hearts are black!" All travellers who have passed through the two adjacent states have noted the relative gloom of Nagir, and some